5: Harrison D-4 (1912-1924) 1924 M1 Middle East
Bedouin MJ4

369 It is not such a life as would be popular in
181 America, but men live, and women live, and children live there, and love their desert with an unparalleled devotion. Transplanted to a real garden spot of the earth, they weep for a glimpse of their beloved desert.

The love of the desert is a very deep and a very beautiful thing. For political purposes one of these desert chiefs was urged to give up his residence in the open and arid desert and come to live in the town. The greater comfort and luxury to be found in the town were pointed out to him as contrasted with the hardships and loneliness of the desert; but the old chief did not see it that way. "In the town," said he, "I have no doubt that I shall find all the things which you describe, but out here in the desert I have my family and my goats, great distances, and God."

182 In such a country only one type of life is possible, and that is the Bedouin type. Some knowledge of the Bedouin, his environment and its effect upon him is fundamental in any effort to understand the Arab. The nomad tribe is probably the basis from which the other types of Arab life have been developed historically, and these other types can be most easily understood today if studied in connection with the simpler organization of the desert. The most conspicuous difference from our own society lies perhaps in the fact that all members of the community do the same thing. Some are more energetic than others, and on that account own larger herds of camels and larger flocks of goats or sheep, but the occupation of all is the same, and the standards of life differ very little.

619 The Bedouins are divided into tribes, and the larger
622 tribes into sub-tribes. These tribes of Arabia are "communities of will," to use H. G. Wells' phrase, and the in-

5: Harrison D-4 (1912-1924) 1924 M1 Middle East
Bedouin MJ4

parently meeting with no great obstacle on the way. In five minutes everybody is filled to repletion. Pounds of meat have been consumed and bushels of rice. The side dishes are empty. Enormous wooden bowls of buttermilk are brought in and the meal washed down with great draughts of this favorite Arab drink. It is not remarkable that after a feast everybody expects to take a nap. So ends the festivity and the Bedouin settles down once again to his meager and poverty-stricken existence in the desert.

Life as a nomad shepherd brings the Bedouin into naked and constant contact with nature. He is out of doors almost all of the time, and his tent with its rents and holes hardly serves to separate him from the outside world to any significant degree even when he is inside. The sun over him by day and the moon and stars by night, the long stretches of sand and the rough rocky plains, the sand storms which are the terror of the desert, the fierce heat of the summer and the frosts of the winter, all of these are his constant companions. He learns to know the wilderness as few know it. The tracks of the various animals in the sand are to him an easily legible history of the happenings of several days back. Thus he lives not simply in contact with nature but rather immersed in it. The desert may be cruel, but he pines away if transplanted. His life may be hard, but he wants nothing else.

Yet strangely enough, in spite of his intense love for the desert and its freedom, all the beauties in nature around him fall on blind eyes as far as the Bedouin is concerned. Even the desert sunset and the moon-lit sand dunes apparently stir no responsive chord in his heart. It is as if all such things had been stripped off

5: Harrison D-4 (1912-1924) 1924 M1 Middle East
Bedouin MJH

and cast away as useless encumbrances in the stern fight for life. He is the victim of his environment in that he suffers so desperately from poverty and want. His clothes hang in tatters and rags; his tent is cold in winter and hot in summer; his food is reduced nearly to the limit of bare subsistence. Most of his children die because of the unsuitable food, the hard conditions of life and the ignorance of the parents. The dirt and disorder in which he lives beggar description. Out of this soil springs one of the freest and most unconquerable spirits in the world, but even so it is impossible to believe that its finest development is attainable under such handicaps. The terrible thing is not that the condition in which he lives distresses his sensitive spirit, but precisely that it does not distress him at all. The Bedouin may claim to have conquered poverty. He stands forth uncrushed by its heaviest load, but his indomitable spirit has nevertheless paid a price, and a heavy price, for that victory.

Bedouin life, however, in spite of this terrible poverty and lack of the amenities that we are accustomed to regard as necessary even to existence, has in it many characteristics that we of the luxurious and effete West might emulate with benefit. Throughout the earth and almost throughout history, men have dreamed of equality. France ran with blood a hundred and thirty years ago because of man's search for it. Russia is red with the same struggle now. Men talk about it and dream about it wherever men see visions and dream dreams. In inland Arabia men practise it, and there is a charm in the dirty, poverty-cursed, arid desert that will be searched for in vain throughout the pampered and self-satisfied world outside. His sense of equality with all the world is the breath of life to a nomad Arab, and his spirit stands

5: Harrison D-4 (1912-1924) 1924 M1 Middle East
Bedouin MT54

"Well," I persisted, "the matter does not seem to trouble you a great deal."

"No indeed," with an even broader grin if that were possible. "It does not trouble me at all. Just as soon as I get out of here, I will go and steal somebody else's. Who knows? Perhaps I may have more than I had before."

The tribal fights that keep the country in a continual state of turmoil are little more than glorified raids for the sake of plunder. They intensify the poverty of the community, for legitimate trade is handicapped, and this irregular exchange of goods cannot in the nature of the case benefit the whole society, however much it may temporarily enrich individuals. But life without the excitement of these raids seems to the desert nomad a tame and a stale thing, hardly worth living. On the other hand, personal property, such as is kept in tents, is as sacredly individual as it is with us, and its theft is keenly resented. The conception that every man's home is his castle is one of the most fundamental ideas of the Arab, and when the crew of a gunboat many years ago attempted to search the inner quarters of a house in Dibai for firearms, the resulting indignation was so intense that foreigners found themselves unable to enter that district for nearly ten years. The household belongings that the Bedouin keeps in his tent may be poor things but they are very much his own.

This life of the desert, with its poverty and hardships and its primitive economic conditions, has nevertheless so worked its charm on the Bedouin nomad that he longs for nothing else. The Bedouin with his intense individualism seems particularly adapted to the desert. He loves its vast distances and its solitude. Anything less

5: Harrison D-4 (1912-1924) 1924 M1 Middle East
Bedouin M54

168 if the Bedouins were willing to settle down to that sort
361 of existence.

461 But the Bedouin, even though he knows of these places, does not care to give up his free desert life for the hard
463 and disagreeable labor of the towns. He is faithful to
552 his camels, and to his goats and sheep if he is fortunate
231 enough to have them. He loves these animals and not one of them lacks a personal name. The little lambs and kids will be carried in his arms when the road is rocky
461 or steep. The work of a cultivator, however, he hates,
565 and he will nearly starve before descending to such a level
186 as to engage in it. He looks down upon the townsmen with a lofty scorn and thinks of their hard labor as unworthy of men, fit rather for animals. This remarkable man regards himself as heaven's favorite, and he exhibits a contempt for the rest of the world and a satisfaction with himself and his life that would be sublime if they were not terribly pathetic.

● 181 Yet far from being ridiculous this Bedouin of the des-
611 ert is one of the most splendid figures of our time. Out
755 of that fearful poverty which amounts to constant semi-starvation, out of a lack of cleanliness that is continual degradation of the spirit, out of an isolation and an ignorance that make him a provincial in spite of himself, he stands as the world's supreme example of that Liberty, Equality and Fraternity that have been the dream of the ages. Tied down and limited by the lack of all material things, his spirit looks on them with indifference and cheerful contempt and pines away only when immersed in the obese and self-satisfied materialism of the town. He rises triumphant over his environment by the sheer strength of his spirit. Ignorant of all the wis-

5: Harrison D-4 (1912-1924) 1924 M1 Middle East
Bedouin M34

dom of books, he has attained to that supreme wisdom which is a secret hidden from most schoolmen. He has learned that the world and all its material blessings are trifles compared to the things of the spirit; that the only things that are important for us to know are how to worship God and how to associate with our fellow men.

It is by the things of the spirit that the Bedouin lives. Take him away from his beloved desert with its poverty and death, its aridity and loneliness, and he will languish although his stomach may be full and his bed soft. Let him breathe the air of the desert's freedom and equality and hospitality, and his cheerfulness is unquenchable, even though his belt is tightened because of hunger and his flocks and herds are dying of thirst. The Bedouin's cheerfulness in the face of adversity is a proverb. His happy-go-lucky spirit bows to the pressure of no adverse material conditions whatever. Perhaps it is because he has so few of the various luxuries of this world to enjoy that he looks on them with such great contempt. Doubtless also his poverty has much to do with the emphasis he puts upon the things of the next world as compared to the affairs of this one. His hopes are centered the other side of the grave. To the Bedouin God is actually the greatest reality in the universe, and the greatest task of life is to please Him. Few men anywhere in the world consider their religion a matter of such vital moment as do the Sunnis, or orthodox Mohammedans, of the Arabian desert, particularly in the inland regions which have been shaken recently by the great *Akhwan* revival. We shall have occasion in later chapters to discuss the religious conceptions and practices of the Arab in more detail, but no description of desert life would be

5: Harrison D-4 (1912-1924) 1924 M1 Middle East
Saudi Arabia HJ1
Bedouin HJ4

S 369 466 565 511 is greater. The gardener may consider himself hard worked and poorly rewarded. Both of these statements are true. The terms of his agreement with the man who owns the garden are oppressive. He knows very well that his labor is making the land-owner rich while he remains poor. Nevertheless, his lot is vastly more comfortable and he is much more of a polished gentleman than the Bedouin. His wife at least does not wash her hair in camel's urine. The community as a whole, including the artisans and gardeners, has sufficient food and adequate clothes. Compared with desert conditions, people keep S [342] clean. Whether built of stone or of mud bricks or of date beams and date leaves, their houses are good shelter from the weather, are warm in winter and fairly cool in summer. S 565 517 On holidays it is refreshing to see how gaily attired they all are. The poorest have a large amount of leisure and can visit their friends and enjoy a pleasant social life.

S 565 574 B 181 574 This society is confined to members of their own class, but within those limits it is quite as fine and unconstrained and free as that of the Bedouin. Indeed, in some ways there is a spontaneity and a good fellowship and a genuine brotherhood that go far beyond anything that the Bedouin knows. The Bedouin is an individualist, and in his home he is seen at his best. His association with friends outside of his own tent, even though they are members of his tribe, is marked by a grave taciturnity that is far removed from the spirit shown when the silversmiths of Hasa have a social evening together or when the date gardeners of Katif entertain a stranger.

S 22 Furthermore, in these oasis towns there are the beginnings of Arabic art. Arabic penmanship, when done by a master, is real art, and the expert Arab penman is probably the most highly developed artist the place affords

21: Fisher S-4 (no date) 1950 M1 Middle East
Bedouin MJ4

622 is highly characteristic of nomadic pastoralists. The chief (sheikh) of the community has considerable personal power, which is tempered only by precedent (the collective experience of the group as a whole) and by the opinion of older members of the tribe. There is little place
● 181 for individuality, or for innovation, and patriarchal communities have kept their ways of life largely unaltered through many centuries. It has been said that if Abraham were to return, he would find little change in the habits of the present inhabitants of the Syrian and

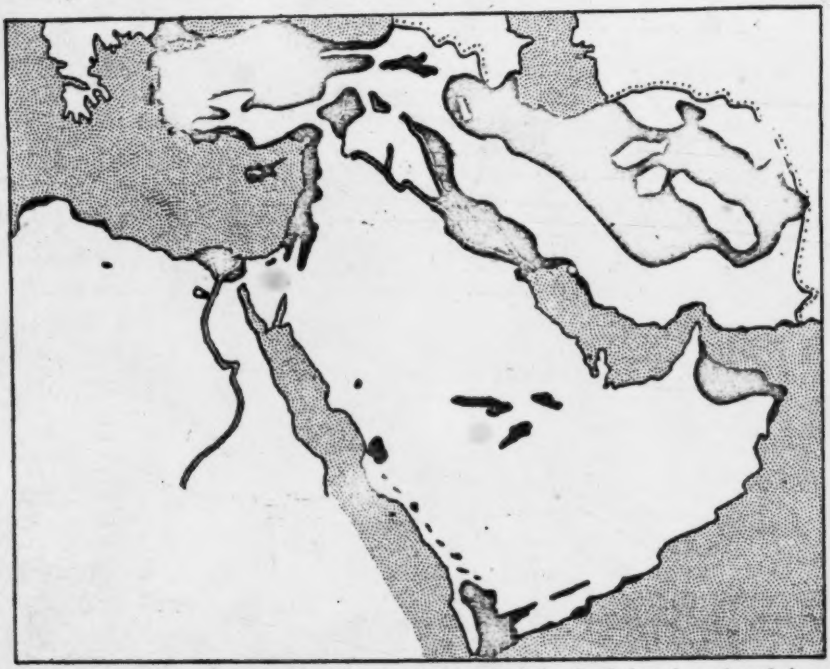

FIG. 20. Nomadism. Areas of nomadism unshaded. Settled and semi-settled occupation shown in black.

Arabian deserts; and, apart from effects following the introduction first of iron in the second millennium B.C.. and later of firearms, life among the Kurds seems scarcely to have varied since their present homeland was first occupied in *c.* 2400 B.C.

619 A sharp limit to the size of social groupings amongst nomads is set by natural resources, which in a given district can support only a relatively small number of people. Thus the unit amongst Badawin is the tribe—a group large enough to profit by advantage of numbers, yet small enough to exist under desert conditions. Family relationship is strong, and perpetuated by emphasis on intermarriage within

1: Raswan T-3 (1913-35) 1947 MD4 Rwala
Bedouins M54

574 231 572 years ago? He, as thou, loved our fast and enduring runners, those 'Drinkers of the Wind', which Allah bestowed on our forefather Ishmael."

Neither the scribe nor anyone else said a word about the stallion, and I dared not ask again; for I imagined that Mishal was particularly fond of this young horse.

574 431 The day of my departure came. The patriarchal *sheykh* and I exchanged words of formal farewell. Then he led me aside and bade me sit down with him at the farthest tent-peg. After a few minutes of silence, he took two documents from a leather pouch and said: "I have long noticed that thou hast taken the Saqlawi colt to thy heart. He is the best of our breeding, and I am happy to make thee a present of him, that thou mayest always remember our friendship and noble horses. Take the young stallion with thee and mention no thanks nor price, so that this remembrance may live forever unclouded in our hearts."

"The Lord be good to thee, O Mishal ibn Faris," I replied, "for that I am allowed to part from thee with such happy memories."

What more could I say in response to his simple words? I knew the Bedouins. To be open-handed makes most of them happy; and further, Mishal was a very rich man. To him "belonged" not only the Shammar in the Northern Jesirah (Mesopotamia), but he actually owned sixty-nine villages and their cultivated lands on the Khabur River. I could only hope that God would grant me the opportunity some time of showing my heartfelt thanks to Mishal in some special way.

[181] [423]

followers. I took with me only a single servant and we bought two inferior riding camels for £15 each from a tribal encampment near Ramadi. My expenses were limited to the purchase of these two camels and a cheap suit of Arab clothing.

The most striking attribute of the bedouin of twenty-five years ago was his bold frankness and democracy. Perhaps because he lived in a great open country, he more often than not spoke in a rather loud voice. He was no respecter of ranks or dignities, and addressed everybody by his first name. If he did not know it, he would accost the stranger in stentorian tones with the greeting, "Peace be upon you, O man!" In 1921, when King Feisal of Iraq paid his first visit to Ramadi, a number of tribesmen introduced to him greeted him without ceremony but with perfect urbanity as "O Feisal!"

This absence of ceremony held nothing of unseemly familiarity or bad taste. It was purely naïve. It had never occurred to the Arab tribesman that classes existed. A barefooted bedouin in a ragged cloak would walk up to a king, shake him by the hand and wish him good morning, completely disregarding the merriment or horror of the whispering courtiers.

Before the days of governments, the tribal chiefs fulfilled some of the tasks of administration. They made war and peace on behalf of their tribes; usually, it is true, preferring war. But to the defenceless traveller they provided protection from the depredations of their followers.

The Syrian desert between the Euphrates and the Wadi as Sirhan in Trans-Jordan is entirely occupied by Aneizah. So numerous is this tribe that it has itself split into several subdivisions under independent chiefs, who in those days were not infrequently at war with one another. Of these subdivisions, the Amarat occupied the eastern half of the desert and owed allegiance to Iraq. But the second half of our journey would take us across the area of the Ruwallah, who were subjects of Syria.

I decided to go first to the tent of Fahad ibn Hadhdhal, the great shaikh of the Amarat division of the Aneizah. So noble was Ibn Hadhdhal by descent that he was sometimes called the father of the Arabs. The great tribes of Aneizah had been in occupation of the Syrian desert for less than 200 years, having

12: Glubb G-3 (1930-1946) 1948 MG1 Jordan
BEDOUINS MJ4

migrated from Central Arabia. Before Ibn Hadhdhal, the greatest shaikh in the Syrian desert had been Ibn Jesham, who now lives in poverty on the Lower Euphrates.

It was, indeed, related that an Arab petitioner had once accosted His Majesty King Abdul Aziz ibn Saud by the title of Chief of the Arabs, but that the latter had protested: "I take refuge with God, my son! The Chief of the Arabs is Ibn Hadhdhal." With less than 200 years of rule to their credit, the Sauds were a new family to the Arabs.

When this story was repeated to Ibn Hadhdhal, he interrupted the narrator to object: "I take refuge with God, my son!" said the old chieftain. "The chief of the Arabs is Ibn Jesham." Such was the modest chivalry of these old chiefs, although all of them were at war with one another.

From Ibn Hadhdhal I obtained a letter to Al Nuri ibn Shaalan, chief of the Ruwallah. A retainer of Fahad's, Burjas al Dhafiri, was detailed to accompany us on our journey, to save us from molestation by the Amarat. He could not, of course, protect us from raiders from other tribes. Burjas came from the Dhafir tribe, not the Amarat. He had been obliged to flee from his relatives owing to a blood feud, and had taken refuge with Ibn Hadhdhal, whose trusted retainer he had become. Burjas was so short-sighted that he was almost blind, but he knew the desert perfectly for hundreds of miles. As we rode along, he would cross-question us as to what we could see. "To the north-west, there should soon appear two low round hills each surmounted by a heap of stones, like a woman's breasts." "Can you see on the south a tall grey peak? It is Feridat al Wa'ar."

Burjas, half-blind, carried 200,000 square miles of desert in his mind's eye, and could estimate when every distant landmark would come into view.

We made for the water-holes at Al Molussi, in the hope of hearing news of Ibn Shaalan. The water-holes were in a narrow valley at the foot of a rocky cliff. There was nobody camped on the water. We stopped to drink, when suddenly we were startled by a voice calling: "What are you, O camel riders?"

High above us on the rocky cliff face sat three men, each holding a rifle. Burjas argued with them without revealing our identity,

12: Glubb G-3 (1930-1946) 1948 MG1 Jordan
BEDOUINS MJ 4

desert country, full of tribes which recognized the authority of no government. Without the assistance of this old man, it might be impossible to proceed. Even so, I felt that I could with dignity wait no longer, and I signalled to my two companions. We rose, walked out of the tent to our camels, and began to adjust the saddles and prepare to mount. But a slave ran out to us and, pulling Ibn Hadhdhal's man by the sleeve, he led him back to the tent. Apparently he persuaded the shaikh that we were harmless, for we were invited back, and Al Nuri himself so far unbent as to say, "You are welcome! We are always glad to see the English!" This appeared to use up his available conversation, and he soon afterwards disappeared. We spent the rest of the day strolling about, talking to the slaves and tribesmen, or sitting amongst bales of cloth and tobacco in the tiny tent of an itinerant merchant from the Iraq desert oasis of Kubaisa.

Al Nuri was a tremendous personality who maintained despotic control over his tribe. His authority was notorious, and the Ruwallah were frequently laughed at by other tribes for their tame submission to such autocracy. One such story related how a man of the tribe, summoned in the tomb by the recording angels to give an account of his actions on earth, replied, "I am only a dead Ruweili, and all claims are settled by Ibn Shaalan." But although a redoubtable champion in action (he had murdered his elder brother in order to make himself shaikh of the tribe), he did not, like most Arabs, possess the gift of conversation.

The authority which Ibn Shaalan wielded over the Ruwallah was probably unique amongst bedouins, and was due to personal fear of this formidable old man. The Arab tribesman will accord theoretical and verbal respect to the old families of chiefs, but he will rarely accord them obedience in practice. He constantly opposes and argues against his shaikh. Not infrequently he loses his temper, creates a violent scene and hastens to strike his tent and move away to join the following of some other chief who will treat him with more consideration. Amongst bedouins freedom always tended to degenerate into anarchy—but free they were—freer perhaps than any other race in the world.

In happy England we have come, for centuries past, to identify our personal liberties with the political independence of our

181 country. Few people in Britain have realized to what an extent personal and national freedom may be divorced, a point so clearly brought out by Gibbon at the head of this chapter. In Turkish days, the Arabs had no political existence, but as individuals they were as free as any men in the world. Their freedom admittedly owed nothing to Turkish generosity. It was due solely to the inability of the Government to control them.

485 609 We slept but one night in the camp of Ibn Shaalan. Next morning we set out once more, having bidden farewell to Burjas, and accompanied by one Qasim ash Shemam, a swarthy villain, detailed to accompany us by Al Nuri. We had scarcely ridden for an hour when we were stopped by two camel riders who overtook us, waving their cloaks to show that they were not hostile, an advisable precaution in those days when the custom of the desert was often to shoot first and ask questions afterwards. They proved to be the nephews of the shaikh, Khalid and Trad ibn Shaalan. In contrast to Al Nuri, they greeted us only with smiles and expressions of welcome, and begged us to spend the rest of the day with them. We protested in vain that we had ridden for only an hour. Half laughing and persuading, half compelling, they turned the heads of our camels, and we soon came upon the big black tent concealed in a small valley in the bare, rocky hills.

There could be no doubt of the warmth of our welcome here. Not only were we obliged to eat and drink almost continuously all day, but Trad pronounced himself dissatisfied with our outfit. It is true that the weather was cold, and the Syrian desert can be bitter when a north wind howls over these barren steppes. First I was obliged to accept some warm gloves, then a magnificent pair of black French boots with pointed toes and buttoning halfway up the calf. I was doubtful for which sex they were originally intended. Sugar, tea, meat, bread and other additions were made to our provisions. It was with difficulty that I resisted the offer of a smart suit of clothes and a better riding camel.

An officer or administrator can rarely obtain a true impression of the people in the district in which he works. To do so, few methods can be better than to travel through the country unknown and poorly dressed, with one or two companions. I was quite unknown to Khalid and Trad, and they were themselves powerful

k Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

what the world would call honest methods. Hence if he cannot live on somebody's largesse he must steal or raid. He cannot spin, to work he is ashamed. If he is forbidden to raid (as is the case under Bin Sa'ud's regime to-day), the fight for life is a particularly severe one, when he is not provided with an occupation to enable him to earn. Year in, year out, the poorer type of Badawin—and there are many tens of thousands of such—never gets a "square" meal according to our standards. He probably has meat only when he can cadge it off somebody more fortunate than himself, or when his shaikh gives a dinner party.

His own food for most of the year consists of only camel's milk and a handful of dates per day. The camel-herd gets even less than this.

The Badawin's clothes are on the same scanty scale as his food, a thin cotton *dishdásha* (smock), replaced only when it falls off his back with age, and a threadbare *'abba* (cloak), *kaffiyah* and thin rope *agál* (head cloth and head cord), are all he has to cover his ill-nourished body. Yet all this makes for toughness and hardihood, and the average Badawin seems made of steel. The lack of warm clothing is probably the hardest thing in life that he has to bear, for in winter the temperature often falls below freezing point, and the winds are of ice, and cut the body through and through. I have never in my life felt so cold as in the desert a hundred miles inland of Kuwait when a *yáhi* or *jabali* wind has been blowing in December or January. Yet in spite of the hard life, the Badawin is never in danger of actual starvation or of dying from want. His *ahl* (family) would never permit this, nor would the system of affording three days' hospitality to all and sundry —such a splendid feature of democratic Arabia—allow of a man reaching such straits. A person who is down and out, without a penny to his name, would in reality be far worse off in London than in Arabia, where he could always hope to find a black tent or two to sponge on.

A Badawin's dream and ambition in life is to possess about a dozen camels, next a wife, and afterwards a mare, half a hundred sheep and a *saluqi*—I am, of course, assuming that he starts with a rifle and a *dhalúl* (riding camel). Give the desert man these essentials and he is a made man, for both camels and sheep double themselves in three years. Any male lambs that are born, he kills for food, the females he

151 721 followed these tracks for about two hundred yards. He then came back to us and said that fifteen Awamir from the north had raided the Junuba near the southern coast, lifted three of their camels, watered at a certain well, and passed this way twelve days before. I myself could not have been certain that the tracks were even the tracks of camels, they were so blown by the wind, but he had read the whole story. We had been out of touch with all Arabs for over a month, but when we met Badu they confirmed that this raid had taken place exactly as he had said. It is, however, a mistake to think that all Badu can track. Some of them are as bad at tracking as they are at guiding, but when you meet a good tracker or a good guide his skill is uncanny.

181 577 609 574 You might think that a life like this, where to keep alive at all is only just possible, was bound to degenerate into a brutish struggle for survival. But this is not so. These Badu are, it is true, hard and ruthless, avaricious and impatient of restraint, yet no people are so generous. They will give away their clothes literally from off their backs, and they are brave, loyal to each other, courteous, patient, and unselfish. I have spent the greater part of the last five years with them, and I have found it hard indeed to live up to their standards of decency. Arab hospitality is famous, but I wonder if you realize what it implies. The Badu do not ask someone to dinner when they have got something extra or when they feel inclined. One or two or half a dozen people are travelling past, see an encampment, and decide to spend the night there, for the traveller in the desert takes a free meal of anyone he sees. The host and his family are probably almost starving, yet everything they have is routed out and set before their self-invited guests, whom they may never have seen before, and if possible they will slaughter an animal for their dinner. I have often received this hospitality, and even now it makes me uncomfortable, though my host has sent me away in the morning feeling that it really was I who had conferred a kindness on him. Of course, another time it is one's host who is travelling and taking meals off someone else, so it evens up, I suppose. But it is not that; it is the wonderful, open-hearted, ungrudging way in which they do it. I am afraid I have always resented the sight of unwanted guests when we were short of food.

576 264 [271] 576 [486] 577 When travelling they always divide up their food before each meal and then draw lots for it, otherwise there is invariably an argument, never because someone says he has been given too little, but because he maintains that he has received too much. Among semi-settled Arabs, where the strict Badu conventions are not necessarily observed, you soon see how quickly it is resented when someone always takes the largest piece. Once we reached a well after we had been twenty-four hours without water, yet no one would drink when we arrived because some of our party had lingered behind to graze their camels, and they would only drink when everyone was there. The bond which exists between travelling companions is indeed tremendously strong; it is only this which makes travelling possible at all. If you are accompanied by a tribesman from a hostile tribe, you are safe from that tribe while he is with you, and he would fight in your defence even against his own brothers. To betray a companion is the blackest crime which a Badu can commit; but it goes

further than this, for none of them wishes to get a reputation for being a quarrelsome or trying companion, and so, when there is anything to do, they all jump up and offer to do it, whether it is to look for a camel, gather wood, or make coffee. Their life is ruled by conventions, and public opinion sees to it that these conventions are observed. In the desert there is no privacy. Every action is seen, and you might say every word is overheard, for they always live crowded together for safety; in any case, they are the most observant people in the world, and everything that happens, however trivial, is noted and later repeated and discussed, so that something which a man has said or done on the coast of the Persian Gulf will be spoken of months later, hundreds of miles away on the borders of the Yaman.

Another difference between Badu and villagers is the way they treat their animals. No Badui would ever knock his camel about; it is far too precious, and in any case he is much too deeply attached to it. You will often see him fondling and kissing his camel, and he will generally be hunting round for titbits for it. Badui, indeed, will always sacrifice their own comfort to that of their animals. Some years ago, when we arrived in the Hadhramaut out of the desert, I remember the enormous meals which were provided for us, such as my always hungry companions cannot even have dreamed of; yet next day they were frantic to get back to the desert where there would be proper grazing for their animals. Sometimes, looking at a wonderful view, I have said to a Badui, "Isn't that lovely?" and he has looked round for a bit and answered, "No, it is rotten bad grazing," and he saw nothing else, whereas if he had been a Persian he would have rhapsodized over it.

Yet they are passionately fond of poetry. They are a noisy, talkative race. I think many of them would find it as hard to stop talking as a heavy smoker to stop smoking, but they will sit for hours in silence if someone is reciting poetry. They are also deeply religious, and in their hard lives they derive at all times a profound comfort from their faith. Townsmen often scoff at them and say that they are little better than pagans because they do not observe all the ritual of Islam and are sometimes lax over their prayers and fasting, but you cannot be with them without realizing what an integral part of their everyday lives their religion is. A Rashdi once described to me how alone he had crossed the trackless wastes of the Eastern sands for 450 waterless miles. Astounded that anyone should have ventured on such a journey unaccompanied, I asked him, "Do you really mean that you were by yourself?" and he answered me quite simply, "God was my companion."

The Badu are the product of their environment, and it is the constant struggle for survival which has fashioned them as they are. Security is unknown to them and their rewards are at all times pitifully small. At any moment drought, disease, or raiders may sweep their herds away. Yet, tempered from childhood by wind and sun, they face life unflinchingly. In this harsh and barren land the desert lad mates only with the desert maid, for who else would share the Badu's couch amodg the wind-blown sand? For centuries they have guarded the purity of their blood with the dagger, and they are fine-drawn, highly strung, and unstable as thoroughbreds.

181 554 177 577 thoroughbreds. No race prizes lineage higher, yet they are the most democratic people in the world and the most individualistic. Among them there is real equality. To certain families, by virtue of their descent, they accord certain privileges, but as a courtesy, not as a right, and Badu sheikhs command respect only as long as they merit it. The traditional Arab way of life, fast vanishing to-day in contact with the West, owed much to Badu concepts, for the villagers and townsmen of Arabia, who form by far the greater part of her population, live close to the desert and were profoundly affected by it until motor-cars and aeroplanes removed for ever the need for camel journeys. Most of them are, indeed, of Badu origin, for the desert tides have always stranded the weak and broken upon the fringes of the Sown. Everywhere the Arabs have, at all times, judged honour and chivalry and hospitality by the standards of the tribesmen. Their love of liberty, their freedom from prejudice of class and caste, and their enthusiasm for poetry have come to them from the desert.

159 577 81 It is impossible to assess the character of the Badu, for among no other race have so many contradictory qualities been fused together. I myself have witnessed their courage and self-reliance, their endurance and pride of race, and I remember their patience, generosity, and unselfishness. But often I have been exasperated by their avarice and wearied by their endless [135] importunities. No Badu thinks it shame to beg, and usually he will look disparagingly at the gift which he has received and grumble, "Is this all [137] that you are going to give me?" Grasping and avaricious, they will talk unceasingly of money and argue heatedly for days about a dollar, then they will slaughter a camel worth 150 dollars to feed a stranger. Loyal to each other, they are yet without regard for human life and will knife an unarmed herdsboy with a jest. Cheerful and easily amused, they are generally good-tempered, though passionate when roused and quick to resent an injury.

166 I have often wondered as I rode across the desert what the future, and even the immediate future, holds for my companions and their kinsmen. The discovery of oil on the Persian Gulf is going to affect them profoundly and make it impossible for them to continue in their old ways, even if they would. I think myself that the oilfields will empty the desert. This movement of tribes from the Yaman and the Hadhramaut towards the north and the north-east is a movement which has been going on for thousands of years. It probably started even before the great migration of the Qahtan tribes, when, overwhelmed by calamity in their homes round Marib, some of them pushed across the deserts and occupied Oman. In recent years tribes such as the Awamir, Ruashid, and Manahil have left their homelands in the steppes to the north-east of the Hadhramaut and moved out into the sands to escape from the incursions of more powerful 166 tribes pressing on them from the west. Having accustomed themselves to 177 life in the sands, they have penetrated ever further and further into the Empty Quarter. In the past twenty or thirty years as conditions have become more settled in the north, due to the extension of Ibn Saud's influence over the powerful Murra tribe, they have grazed their herds round the Liwa oasis and in the sands near the Trucial Coast. Now the money to be earned on the oilfields along the Gulf is drawing the Badu

in ever-increasing numbers from as far away as Najran and Dhaufar. They go there at present with the intention of collecting enough money to buy a camel or two, so that they can build up a new herd, or perhaps marry, when they return to their homelands, but I think that every year an increasing number will settle down more or less permanently round the oilfields.

In the desert the Badu need very little to keep themselves alive. Their herds provide them with milk, butter, and occasionally with meat, but they have certain requirements which they cannot supply for themselves. They need cloth and cooking pots, knives, ammunition, an occasional load of dates or grain, and such simple luxuries as a handful of coffee or a little tobacco. To get these things they visit the villages or towns and sell a goat, a little butter, water skins, rugs, and ropes. Life in the desert ceases, however, to be physically possible if the few but entirely essential commodities that the desert Arab has hitherto been able to buy in exchange for the products of the desert become too expensive for him to afford, but the rise in the standard of living along the Persian Gulf is bound to send up the price of food and clothing, and the slightest rise is now fatal to the desert economy. For the Badu have already lost several important resources. In the past, desert transport was in their hands, but now lorries have largely replaced camels. There was also a constant demand in the towns and villages for good riding camels, which were hired by the nomads, and sheikhs would pay big prices for the best breeds. Now most of the villagers and townsmen drive about in cars. Two years ago, when I and my companions rode from Sulayil to Laila along the motor road, the villagers asked us why we did not go in cars "like the Muslamin." A Badui often loses all or nearly all his animals from disease, but where the tribes are still unadministered he can borrow a mount and join a raiding party and perhaps repair his fortunes. In unadministered areas they can also levy a certain amount of blackmail off the villagers, and the village sheikhs are prepared to keep on good terms with the tribes by giving them presents and much hospitality. Badu, however, meet with little sympathy from modern and progressive Arab administrators, who regard them as representing an outlook and way of life which they are anxious to abolish.

The Badu love money; even to handle it seems to give them a thrill, and I have often thought that when they are talking in their sleep they must be counting piles of dollars. Yet I have never had a single dollar stolen on my journeys, though my money has always been carried in unsealed bags distributed at random among the saddle-bags of my companions. The Badu are always obsessed with tales of buried treasure. There is *dhahab* (gold) to be found here and *dhahab* to be found there, under sand dunes, rocks, or even in the middle of quicksands. So naturally the oilfields draw them like a magnet from all over Arabia, and, once there, they find that they can get money for sitting in the shade and guarding something, or for doing work which is certainly easier than watering thirsty camels on a nearly dry well in the middle of summer. There is plenty of good food, abundant sweet water, and long hours for sleep. They have seldom had these things before, and now they are being

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Canaanite invasion of Syria, the Hyksos invasion of Egypt, and the Hebrew invasion of Palestine are also to be explained by similar antecedent events in Arabia.

The distribution, grouping, character, and resources of the several tribes are the subject of a subsequent chapter (III); and their relation to particular localities will be stated in the special chapters on the different provinces.

It would be beyond the scope of this Handbook to give a detailed description of Bedouin society; and mere generalities about it are of little service. It is perhaps, however, worth while to say something about those features and customs of Bedouin life which most directly affect the reception and entertainment of strangers, and should, therefore, be known before contact. Dictated by similar necessities, these are more or less common to all tribesmen. For all the rest, study of Doughty's *Arabia Deserta* cannot be too strongly recommended. Pretty well everything that needs to be known about Bedouin life can be found there by a patient reader.

Arabia is 'a land of ancient violence'. For this state of things geographical conditions are largely responsible. Only in very few, rare, and narrow districts is it possible to derive from the soil, not a superfluity, entailing wealth, leisure, and consequent civilization, but anything better than hand-to-mouth existence in full sight of starvation. Agriculture is impossible in three-quarters of the total area, and man must live on peripatetic food pastured on such thin and evanescent vegetation that a single family has to keep on the move in order to live. Water again, the prime condition of existence, is to be found for the most part only very occasionally in deep wells, or rain-pools, and this under a subtropical sun. Scanty sources have to be guarded with the most jealous exclusiveness. The regions over which these conditions prevail usually offer few or none of those natural features which serve elsewhere to protect or conceal; and in their vast extent and distribution they impinge so generally on the few fertile districts, or so often encircle these, that hardly any part of Arabia is altogether unaffected by the inevitable social features of life on steppe and desert.

The most obvious of these features is suspicion. Every man is treated as a potential enemy, till he shows evidence to the contrary. He is kept at a distance until his person or his authority can be recognized. Therefore, in approaching Bedouins, it is as prudent to go slow and give them time as in approaching a sentry in a war-area. Disregard of this advice will result in fight or flight, according to circumstances. While all Bedouins are instinctively suspicious of, and hostile to, the unknown, various

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609 northern Hasa; and there are certain districts, containing but few
486 wells, where several tribes, each having a right of watering, cross and recross each other's dīras, without committing thereby acts of trespass, though not without engendering frequent friction. Such, for example, are the steppe west of Jebel Shammar and that north-east of the same district towards the lower Euphrates valley. For the right of crossing a dīra the traveller is expected to pay in money or kind to the chief, who often drives a very hard bargain, but should not be regarded as levying blackmail. After all, in return for the payment, he and his tribe concede protection and allow the traveller to consume some of their very scanty supply of fodder and
621 water. All Arab society is patriarchal. Some one man can answer for each unit, and among the best Arabs for very large units. The traveller's chief danger arises where tribes are small or so broken up that not more than one or two families recognize a chief.

486 There is, however, one recognized exception to this sanctity of
721 dīras, namely, the right of every tribe, or even section of a tribe, to
577 raid any other according to a well-established code of warfare, unless barred by definite federation, treaty, or ancient friendship. To go
621 out on raid (*ghazwah*) is the young man's chance of proving himself, and to provide him with that opportunity is virtually obligatory on all tribes, except the meanest. The greater chiefs, like their ancient cousins, the Assyrian kings, make an annual practice of the Raid. The farther afield it goes, the greater the glory in a society punctiliously sensitive to public opinion. Raiding parties may, therefore, be met very far from the ranges of their own people, and no district is quite safe from them. They may generally be recognized by their travelling light, without women, and on high-bred camels. The *rafiq* is powerless against them in his own dīra, except possibly through some lucky friendship on his part or the repute of his tribe. But raiding parties are not very particular. They will swoop down on a caravan without asking many questions or being much disposed to respect persons. Unless the traveller's party is very decidedly stronger than the attack, it should submit at once. Most of its belongings will be taken, but no life. Such submission is a well-recognized part of the game, and entails no slur on the courage of any members of the party.

486 The more the traveller can learn and retain in his mind of the
181 genealogy of individuals and tribes, in a land where pedigrees are very widely known back to a hoar antiquity and inordinately valued
574 the better for his safety and the impression he will make and leave on his hosts. He should know also, as far as possible, the political grouping of tribes and recent desert history. If, like Doughty, he

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travels *in forma pauperis*, he can avail himself, more than one who takes his own tents and servants, of the protection which Arab usage enjoins a Bedouin to extend to one who has touched as suppliant any part of his tent or belongings or eaten of his food. Strictly the efficacy of the last safeguard expires on the third day, when all that was eaten on the first is supposed to have passed out of the body. It is often worth while to appeal from the men to the women, whose instincts of hospitality, independence, and freedom of action are pleasing features of Bedouin life.

It is worth while to remember that no Bedouin society is wholly self-supporting. Even if it can supply itself with sheer food from its own dira, or some purely Arabian oasis—which it rarely can—it is dependent on the outer world for other necessaries, as well as for any sort of simple luxury. Clothing materials, coffee, tobacco, and, to a great extent, arms and munitions can only reach it from ports, or from the settled districts on the fringes of Arabia. Those, therefore, who control such ports or districts can always exercise an influence upon the desert men, however inaccessible, command their behaviour in the long run, and punish their hostility.

From a military point of view Bedouins make very valueless auxiliaries of trained troops, except as scouts and raiders, or, if long, hot, and waterless stages have to be covered, as messengers.

Settled Folk.

The principal settlements will be dealt with in the special chapters on localities (see Chaps. IV ff.), followed by detailed descriptions of the tribes themselves (see Chaps. XIII ff.)

The ubiquity of nomads in Arabia explains and partly excuses common ignorance about the real extent and importance of its urban and village societies. To say that all the Arabs of the peninsula are Bedouins, or that its society is either nomadic or semi-nomadic, is far from the truth. Not only do the fertile coastal districts in the south-east and south-west of the peninsula contain numerous urban and village communities, rooted to the soil and engaged in agriculture and trade, while the goals of the Pilgrimage, Mecca and Medina, with the port of Jiddah, are considerable towns; but, as has already been pointed out, the three groups of oases in the centre support urban settlements, several of which have over 5,000 inhabitants apiece, besides many agricultural villages, large and small.

It is, however, true that all settled communities in Arabia are affected, in various degrees, by the nomad society, which is never far from them, and often surrounds them. There is much intermarriage between the settled and the unsettled folk: chiefs and